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ABSTRACT

Chapter 7 of a revised volume on school leadership, this chapter advocates the use of participative decision-making (PDM) at the school site level, outlines implementation guidelines, and describes the experiences of some schools with PDM systems. A cornerstone of a reform movement to make organizational operations more democratic and less authoritarian, PDM may be excercised in various ways. It is an essential feature of both team and school-based management, and does not require significant alteration of the school governance power structure. Although the administrator in charge retains authority and responsibility for PDM-based decisions, the process is a high-risk undertaking. However, PDM has numerous advantages over more traditional methods, including better decisions, higher employee satisfaction, and better relations between management and staff. Guidelines for implementing PDM advise administrators to vary their decision-making styles and to proceed gradually toward PDM. Brief descriptions of a teacher leadership team in an Indianapolis (Indiana) high school, the School Improvement Process in Hammond (Indiana), the quality circles program in Oregon City (Oregon), and the Quality of Work Life process in Duluth (Minnesota), illustrate the effectiveness of the PDM technique for motivating others. (MLH)

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Chapter 7

Participative Decision-Making

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In recent decades, a reform movement has been building momentum both in public education and in other sectors of society, notably business. This reform movement can be seen as a broad attempt to make organizations more "democratic" and less authoritarian in their operation. A cornerstone of this reform movement is participative decision-making (PDM).

PDM is an ambiguous term at best and can refer to a variety of decision-making arrangements. In chapter 2, the notion of a continuum of leadership styles was introduced, with the authoritative and "boss-centered" model at one end of the continuum and the democratic and "subordinate-centered" model on the other. In general, the leadership behaviors and systems that utilize PDM are situated toward the democratic end of the spectrum.

The school leader can exercise PDM in a number of ways. He or she may consult with subordinates before making a decision or allow a group to make decisions via consensus or majority vote. If a group makes the decision, the leader can act as an "equal" with no special authority, or the leader can retain the final "veto" power for decisions. As indicated by the programs described later in this chapter, the effective leader uses a variety of decision-making styles, including, at times, an autocratic style.

PDM is an essential feature of both team management and school-based management, discussed in the previous two chapters. Indeed, PDM is the central element of the management team—its *raison d'etre*. In school-based management, decentralization of decision-making authority to the school site is the central theme, but PDM at the school site is also essential to the system's proper function.

The Rationale for Participation

PDM systems do not involve significant alterations of the formal and legal power structure of school governance. The person in charge—whether it be the superintendent or principal—retains both authority and responsibility for the decisions made through the participative process. Thus, decision-making authority in PDM systems is *voluntarily* shared with those in traditionally subordinate positions. The responsibility for the decisions, however, cannot be dis-

persed concomitantly. Thus, PDM is often referred to as a "high risk" undertaking for the administrator involved.

There are three good reasons, though, for believing that this risk is worth taking. First, PDM has been shown to have numerous advantages over traditional, authority-based systems of command, including better decisions, higher employee satisfaction, and better relationships between management and staff. These advantages and some of the research confirming them are discussed later in this chapter.

Second, the "democratic" reform movement referred to earlier has not subsided and is not likely to in the near future. Teachers, parents, and other community members are clamoring for a piece of the decision-making pie. The rights of citizens and teachers to participate in school governance are being written into state laws and collective bargaining agreements.

The writing is on the wall: If school administrators do not voluntarily share their power, they risk the forced rearrangement of decision-making authority through political means. PDM offers educational administrators the opportunity to voluntarily share their power with subordinates and the clients of the school system, allowing the best of both worlds: professional control of the schools and access to the huge potential for improved education that participative management provides.

The third reason the "risk" of PDM is worth taking is that it can prevent the development of adversarial relationships between administrators and teachers. In 1985, Gladys Johnston and Vito Germinario surveyed 450 teachers in New Jersey to study the relationship between teachers' involvement in decisions and their loyalty to school administrators.

The concept of teachers' loyalty to their principal was made the focus of the study because of its understated importance in the hierarchical structure of school governance. According to Johnston and Germinario, "principals who have solely the power of their office can be assured of gaining only the minimal compliance from their teachers."

The researchers concluded that teachers who received a balanced amount of participation were "significantly more loyal to the principal than those characterized as saturated or deprived" of involvement. If principals want to have a more loyal staff, Johnston and Germinario advise them to increase gradually the participation of the 87 percent of the teachers who reported being "deprived" of involvement.

A 1979 study of Montana educators, reported by James Keef, found that much of the discontent and "restlessness" of teachers stems not from low pay but from a lack of involvement in decision-making. According to Keef, the main objectives of teachers are to "have some control over their jobs and profession, and to be professionally consulted on matters that affect children in their classrooms."

When teachers are denied a role in decisions at their schools, collective bargaining through their unions is the only avenue left for voicing their opinions, warns Carl Marburger. Unfortunately, such bargaining takes place

with *district* administrators, and the negotiations focus on money and fringe benefits. The principal and other building administrators who could provide the participation the teachers seek are cut out of the process.

If building-site administrators are afraid to share decision-making authority, numerous studies have found no legitimate basis for this fear. According to research reviewed by James Lipham, "teachers do not wish to usurp the role of administrators to make final decisions. In fact, participative decision-making in schools still is seen [by teachers] as rightfully occurring within an authoritarian organizational context."

Dan Riley found that teachers would like to be involved in a "shared or joint decision-making process," and they "expressed a desire, not to make decisions, but rather to influence or make recommendations." PDM offers administrators an avenue to accommodate such requests.

Of course, just "sharing power" sounds easy enough, yet there are many pitfalls to avoid when implementing PDM. This chapter explores the advantages and risks of PDM, reviews key guidelines for implementation, and describes the experiences of several schools that are currently operating with PDM systems. First of all, however, attention is given to the evolution of the current system of educational governance at the school level and to why many educators advocate a reform of this system.

The Legacy of Educational Governance

From the colonial period until the beginning of the twentieth century, American schools operated with independence that was very similar to constitutional rights of individual states. Citizens formed boards of education that were elected or hired to oversee and plan the organization of community schools. Through consensus decision-making, they determined who would teach, what would be taught, and how the primary goals of the school would be achieved. The operation of local school boards reflected the democratic ideas on which this country was founded.

When American industry early in this century rapidly increased productivity by adopting scientific management principles, school administrators began to adopt similar principles in the schools. As Robert Feir points out, the efficiency of standardization increased educational achievement, but its simplicity disregarded the needs and potential of individual teachers. American industry has long since modified or discontinued the regimen of scientific management, but the educational system has been much slower to change. Although schools have moved away from the concept, "residual centralization, bureaucratic structure, and predetermined distinctions between teaching and administrative roles have remained pretty much intact, despite the growth of unions," states Feir.

According to Cliff Eagleton, 1930 could be considered "the high point of decentralized public education in American democracy." At that time, our schools "were highly decentralized units, simple in organizational design and

controlled by local citizens as part of their ordinary lives." All this was to change, however, with the reform movement known as the "consolidation of schools." Between 1930 and 1950, Eagleton states, "school population increased from 28,000,000 to 46,000,000 pupils, yet the number of school districts decreased over 400%." In 1980, nearly half of all public school children were enrolled in "gargantuan administrative organizations of over 10,000 students."

Districts have expanded geometrically in size and complexity, and administrators and board members now need to possess "expertise in curriculum, finance, policy-making, union negotiations, the nature of the bureaucracy, and so on," says Eagleton. A skill now required of teachers is the ability to work optimally within the bureaucracy and its restraints. Worse still, schools and teachers are now becoming centrally responsible for the "social, emotional, physiological, and moral development of each generation," domains traditionally assigned to the home, the courts, and other institutions.

Inside schools, the structures of authority developed by past generations of education are being reevaluated. A 1983 study by Phillip Schlechty and Victor Vance focused on historical influences on the shape of the teaching force toward determining how the future teaching force could be improved. Between 1950 and 1970, they state, the "postwar baby boom" necessitated a major increase in the size of the teaching population. The tendency "to view teachers as workers and administrators as managers was encouraged by the perception that many of those the schools were compelled to hire were underqualified or unqualified." From a stereotypical viewpoint, "a few good men" were needed in the school's office to "manage the activities of women who were perceived to be well-meaning though technically and intellectually less than outstanding."

In contrast, the advanced education of today's teachers makes them the most qualified educators in our nation's history. Their place in the authority structure of many schools, however, remains as subservient and detached as decades ago. It is time to realize, Schlechty and Vance state, that the students are the workers in the classroom, and the teacher is "a first-line supervisor as opposed to a low-level employee."

Advantages of Participation

One of the fundamental arguments for PDM is that it is the method of school governance most consistent with democratic principles. The belief that those affected by public institutions should have some voice in how they are run is deeply rooted in America's laws and traditions. Making the governance of schools more participative is an expression of belief in the democratic system and is a useful means of teaching both students and educators the principles of the democratic process.

Eagleton takes this concept one step further by suggesting that the treatment of students as "clients" or "outsiders" encourages apathy about personal achievement and self-control, both during and after school. By allowing

students a voice in the organization and operation of their schools, our education system can reflect our democratic system. Most importantly, Eagleton states, such a system would help students to realize "the advantages and responsibilities of freedom."

Participative decision-making can also improve in more specific ways, say proponents, by promoting both better decisions and their more effective implementation. Broader participation increases the number of viewpoints and interests that are expressed and considered while a decision is being made, and this, in turn, may produce better decisions. PDM also improves communication within a school by providing new channels for the exchange of information and ideas, particularly for the "upward" movement of information from the bottom to the top of the administrative hierarchy. Finally, PDM can lead to better decisions and increased efficiency because it allows a school to make fuller use of its human resources, particularly the expertise and problem-solving skills of its teachers.

Since the distance between where a decision is made and where it is put into practice is reduced, PDM can allow the implementation of new ideas and reforms to take place with greater efficiency. If persons implementing policy have participated in the development of that policy, they are more likely to understand it better. In addition, they are more likely to have a greater sense of "ownership" in the decision and thus will feel more committed to its successful implementation.

Finally, evidence suggests that PDM can improve employee satisfaction and school climate. For example, the fact that teachers are consulted about decisions shows them that the school values their opinions; they, in turn, develop greater feelings of professional pride and job satisfaction. Adversarial relationships between administrators and teachers are less likely. With better communications and more satisfied personnel, the school's overall "climate" (discussed in the next chapter) can be significantly improved.

Quality of Decisions

Many of the above advantages of PDM have been confirmed either directly or indirectly by research. Donald Piper, for example, compared the quality of decisions made by individuals acting alone with those they made acting in groups. He first gave each individual subject a test that required making a series of decisions. Whereas members of a control group simply retook the test individually, the remaining subjects were divided into three types of groups for retesting. One type (consensus) had no leaders; group members discussed the problems until they reached solutions that were accepted—though not necessarily agreed upon—by everyone in the group. In the second type of group (participative-best), the individual who had scored highest on the test was chosen group leader and given the responsibility for making decisions after eliciting advice from the rest of the group. The third type (participative-worst) worked the same way, except that individuals with the lowest scores were

designated as leaders.

The results of the testing strongly favored group decisions. Whereas the individuals who retook the test actually scored slightly worse on a second try, each type of group did much better than the average of its members' initial scores. The consensus group decisions were better than the individual averages, and several groups actually outperformed even their best individuals. In each participative-best group, the leaders made better decisions with help than they had made acting alone. The decisions of the participative-worst leaders improved dramatically, though only one such group was able to surpass its best individual.

Although the exercise used for this test was not related to education, its results are significant because they form such a consistent pattern. All the leaders—good test-takers and bad—gained from the participation of others, and in no case did listening to the advice of others cause a leader to make decisions that were less correct. Thus, as Piper suggests, the results indicate that "if arriving at the most correct decision is the primary goal, the involvement of several people . . . will provide better results that the 'one-man-deciding alone' model."

Organizational Effectiveness

As noted earlier, the management structures of school systems often reflect the structures used in industry. To compete in the current world economy, American industry is searching for ways to increase productivity and quality. Several innovations in management have been gleaned from the Japanese.

With some irony, it is often said that the "secret" of Japanese management structures was provided by the teams of efficiency experts and group process specialists sent to Japan by General Douglas MacArthur after the second world war. To some extent this is true, but according to David Hawley, the most important step taken by the Japanese occurred in 1961 when "they took the control of quality out of the hands of central management and made their efficiency experts consultants to work groups." The responsibility and rewards of quality production began to center on the workers, where the creation of quality had always taken place.

One of the Japanese innovations now being transplanted directly into American businesses is the quality circle. A quality circle is usually composed of eight to twelve members who meet weekly to solve problems that concern employees. The members who volunteer to be in the circle often have specific experience with the problems to be solved, and the company provides time, specialized training, and materials for the meetings. Once organized, the group selects a problem to address, collects and organizes data concerning the causes of the problem, and then discusses possible solutions using the information. When a resolution of ideas is complete, the members present their recommendations in a formal meeting with administrators.

Shaker Zahra and his colleagues report that 1,000 U.S. companies—including 200 on the Fortune 500 list—are using quality circles. In each instance, the small investment of developing the groups is considered well worth the potential to "enhance the quality of working life, utilize employee creativity, improve communication between workers and management at all levels, and improve morale."

Quality circles can be just as effective in schools, fulfilling the unquestioned desire for participative decision-making. Later in this chapter we will review the stages of implementing quality circles and look at examples of programs currently operating in schools.

Teacher Satisfaction

Several studies have sought to determine how teachers feel about involvement in decision-making. Joseph Alutto and James Belasco, for example, did pioneering work on the relationship between level of participation and teacher satisfaction. Comparing teachers' actual and desired levels of participation in decision-making, they identified three different conditions: deprivation (too little involvement), saturation (too much involvement—research indicates this is a relatively rare phenomenon), and equilibrium (neither too much nor too little involvement). Test results indicated that teachers in a state of equilibrium were the most satisfied group. Teachers who experienced either deprivation or saturation were less satisfied. Thus, it may be more important to offer a teacher the right amount of participation than it is simply to increase participation.

Important as it is, Alutto and Belasco's work is limited by its exclusive focus on the amount—rather than the type—of participation offered to teachers. Other research has considered whether teachers are more interested in certain types of involvement than others. In 1984, Dan Riley surveyed 750 teachers to determine which avenues of participatory decision-making are preferred. The study was designed to determine the actual and desired amount of participation in decision-making at the classroom level, building level, and district level. Riley's findings indicated, consistently with other research, that "teachers experience significantly greater involvement at the classroom level than at the building and district levels." At all organizational levels, however, respondents reported the desire to have "significantly greater participation." The results indicated that "the more actual participation experienced, the more that is desired," but the involvement focuses on influencing decision-making, rather than "making the decisions."

Further evidence that teachers desire a greater decision-making role in certain areas than in others is provided by the work of Robert Knoop and Robert O'Reilly. They asked 192 teachers how they felt decisions should be made about textbook selection, curriculum planning, and curriculum evaluation. While most teachers felt they should have sole responsibility for selecting textbooks, in other areas teachers did not want sole responsibility, nor did they want to give principals total responsibility. Instead, most favored some sort of

shared decision-making, either through majority rule or a system of "consultation" in which the principal makes the decision with a lot of input from teachers.

Taken together, the above studies constitute a strong endorsement for participative decision-making. They show that PDM can enhance the quality of decisions, increase employees' job satisfaction, prevent adversarial relationships, and, in general, improve the school's climate.

The primary disadvantage of the participative approach is that it requires more time and effort on everyone's part to make it work. Although it often slows down the efficiency of the decision-making process, the advantages accrued through PDM appear to easily outweigh the disadvantages.

Guidelines for Implementation

Many building administrators are convinced of the desirability of PDM at the school site, yet they are not sure how to proceed. How should the organizational structures for involvement be designed? Who should be included in the decision-making process? What kinds of decisions should be shared with others? How should agreements be reached?

Of course, there are no pat answers to these questions. Each school is unique and has different needs, resources, and restrictions that will influence the final form of its PDM system. There are, however, several basic guidelines that should be considered before setting up any shared decision-making system.

The Role of the Principal

Although PDM has many advantages over autocratic decision-making, it does not necessarily follow that all decisions should be made collectively. In some instances—such as when a crisis arises, when decisions are routine, or when special expertise is called for—an autocratic style may be best.

The task facing the school leader involves maximizing several variables—the efficiency of decision-making, the quality of decisions, the use of professional expertise, and the satisfaction of those affected by the decisions made—each of which may be at odds with the others. Simply increasing participation in decision-making without considering the other variables could ultimately be counterproductive. As management consultant Maneck Wadia states,

> Participative management is but one tool in the management bag. An executive proclaiming to be a "participative manager" is tantamount to a carpenter proclaiming to be a "hammerer." Obviously, a carpenter has and needs a variety of tools in achieving objectives. Similarly, a manager needs a variety of techniques to achieve goals.

Instead of sharing all decisions, the astute school leader will make

some decisions autocratically, will make some with input from the staff, and will allow the staff to make some decisions themselves. In short, the effective building administrator will utilize a "situational" style of leadership and will vary his or her decision-making style with the needs of the situation.

Safeguarding the Principal's Authority

When PDM is implemented districtwide, care must be taken to preserve the principal's role as an active instructional leader. In one district that involved staff members on curriculum councils, the roles of administrators and staff members were not carefully defined, with the result that, in many of the district's schools, a vague sense of "collective leadership" eroded principals' authority. Teachers erroneously believed the curriculum council had the final voice in some matters that state law or district policy assigned to the school board or to administrators. Also, principals tended to back away from hard decisions on staff evaluation, assignment, or scheduling. To resolve these problems, the district more carefully defined the purpose and procedures of the curriculum councils and reemphasized the principals' roles as educational leaders.

The Principal's Involvement of Teachers

After synthesizing the data of two recent studies, Judith Dawson identified three contextual factors that the principal can influence to increase teacher motivation and participation during a shift to PDM. The first factor involves the "availability of time and other resources." The research indicated that the use of teachers' noninstructional time had several disadvantages. Meetings are brief, and participants usually feel rushed or tired and cannot concentrate on planning. Dawson recommends that at least some nondiscretionary time—time usually used for classroom teaching or other meetings—be allocated for participatory decision-making so that teachers' work schedules will not be overloaded.

The "local concerns and priorities" of teachers is the second contextual factor. Put simply, teachers respond with greater motivation when the problems they address involve local concerns that they believe are important. If their task involves a secondary priority or an innovation that does not concern them, teachers are not likely to volunteer time or submit to the demands of involvement. It is the principal's responsibility, states Dawson, "to increase the extent to which a program addresses important issues" by being aware of teachers' interests and redirecting programs if new issues of importance arise.

The third factor involves "staff perceptions of administrative commitment to change." Studies indicate that "some principals build reputations of frequently adopting innovations but failing to continue to provide support for them." When this occurs, teachers openly admit their reticence to commit themselves to a new program. Dawson notes, however, that the same teachers "are often surprisingly willing to suspend their skepticism." The best recourse, as always, is to back words with action. The allocation of nondiscretionary time

and a small amount of money for resources is the best evidence to give of the school's dedication to a new program. Simple arrangements, including logical meeting times, reserved rooms, and typed agendas and program materials, can also make a difference.

Who Will Be Involved and How?

The long-term success of a given PDM system is often determined by the amount of research and time invested during its planning and development. To develop an effective system, the school administrator must first determine who will be involved and state the extent, area, and form of their involvement.

In the selection of participants, the "classic rule of thumb," as Robert Muccigrosso states, is "to involve all those in the decision-making who will be directly and significantly affected by the outcome of the decision." Although this general rule seems sensible enough, it is complicated by several considerations.

First, different individuals desire different levels of involvement. Some faculty members might desire a great deal of participation, whereas others may prefer to be told what to do. Thus, the first step in implementing a PDM program would be to determine who has an active desire to be more involved in decision-making. An ideal program would be selective and voluntary, offering participation to those who want it, without forcing it on those who do not.

Involvement in the decision-making process should also be dictated by the situation. "Total group decision making continues to be overutilized in schools," says James Lipham. "In the early stages of any change process, when awareness and support are critical, wide participation should be the rule. In later stages (i.e. implementation), participation should be limited because people weary of group meetings devoted to redeciding issues."

Another complication of involving all those affected by a decision is that some individuals may have special expertise in certain areas that gives them a special status in the decision-making process. This is the classic dilemma between "professionalism" and "populism" in a democratic system. A solution to this problem has never been found and probably never will be.

Nonetheless, the input of others should always be sought and heard. It is the principal's responsibility to decide in each case whether following the advice of an "expert" (who may be the principal himself) or consenting to the desires of the larger group will be most beneficial to the school. In any case, the principal must make clear to the staff members what their role in the decision-making process will be before the process begins. Another problem with the "classic rule of thumb" for involvement is that the decision-making group can quickly become too large and cumbersome for efficient operation. Thus, some form of representation may be called for.

This raises the question of the fair selection of participants on decision-making and advisory committees. Marburger, addressing this issue in a study of school-based management councils, presents four alternatives: appointment

by the principal, appointment by department heads or the faculty council, self-selection by voluntary appointment, or election by the faculty. Marburger recommends the last two alternatives since direct appointment may result in committees that are not representative and raise claims of favoritism. Self-selection and appointment can produce councils with appropriate knowledge and motivation to effect change. Election by the faculty can ensure representative councils, as long as ability is the criterion for selection and not popularity.

Administrators may best determine the extent of involvement desired by teachers and staff through direct communication. As discussed in the last section, research has shown that teachers who feel they have too little or too much involvement are less satisfied than teachers who perceive their participation as appropriate.

According to Lipham, "excessive involvement causes frustration ('Why doesn't the principal just decide and leave us alone?'), whereas under-involvement creates hard feelings ('Why wasn't I consulted?')." The sensitive principal, Lipham concludes, must give attention to both the frequency and the level of involvement and should strive for "a condition of equilibrium" between too little and too much involvement.

In a similar vein, the areas in which participation in decision-making is offered should be those of most concern to teachers. As noted earlier, teachers are more interested in areas that are more immediate to their work—such as textbook selection, curriculum planning and evaluation, and classroom management—than they are in more general management areas. As Knoop and O'Reilly's research indicates, most teachers desire sole responsibility for the selection of textbooks, whereas in other areas they request only a strong consultative role, with the principal making the final decision.

Of course, different teachers have different areas of primary interest. PDM systems can be designed so that teachers influence the policies that affect them most, without getting involved in other areas. In such systems, teachers who did wish to participate in a certain area would also be likely to be those with the greatest interest and expertise in that area, and therefore, presumably, they would have the greatest potential for contributing to better decision-making.

The limitation of teachers to traditional areas and forms of involvement, however, may underestimate their interests and abilities. The studies of quality circles and Japanese management systems reviewed later in this chapter give examples of how teachers can help increase the efficiency of operations schoolwide, as well as inside their own classrooms.

Moving to PDM

Several writers stress the importance of implementing a PDM system gradually. Jane and Rensis Likert, for example, advise organizations not to "at-

tempt one big jump" from an authoritative to a participative system. In moving toward PDM, they state,

> a leader should make no greater shift at any one time than subordinates or members can adjust to comfortably and respond to positively. If a leader makes a sizable shift, the members do not have the interaction skills to respond appropriately and usually are made insecure or frightened by the shift, responding to it negatively.

To develop a program that truly fits the needs of a specific school community, PDM should be introduced gradually, allowed to evolve, and evaluated regularly with feedback from participants. As a result of such evaluations, participants may see that they need to improve their own skills and expertise to make the program more effective. A natural next step might be the design of training sessions providing whatever content is needed.

Richard Schmuck and Philip Runkel have collected exercises to help schools and school groups assess their decision-making structures and learn more about how participative decision-making works. The "Card Discovery Problem," for example, requires participants to find a unique card—something impossible without information-sharing by all members. The "Lost on the Moon" scenario (the exercise used by Donald Piper in the decision-making experiment described previously) teaches participants to reach decisions through consensus by rank ordering equipment most useful for a two-hundred mile trip across the moon. These exercises are helpful because they allow groups to learn techniques of participative decision-making by using it to solve hypothetical problems unlikely to arouse anxiety or strong feeling.

Some of the skills necessary to make PDM work are discussed in detail in the chapters on communicating and leading meetings. Ultimately, the key to a successful PDM program is the development of trust and mutual respect among participants. If these exist, they will foster the open exchange of ideas and feelings that is essential to effective policy-making.

Perhaps the most advanced skills are required for those decision-making strategies that rely on consensus. Angie Garcia lists several guidelines that should be observed by groups trying to reach consensus:

1. Avoid arguing for your own individual judgments. Present your positions as clearly as possible, but listen to other members' reactions and consider the logic before pressing your point.
2. Do not assume that someone must win and someone must lose when discussion reaches a stalemate. Instead, look for the next most acceptable alternative for all. Keep the discussion focused on what you can agree on, even if it is only one small point.
3. Do not change your mind simply to avoid conflict. Be suspicious when agreement comes too quickly and easily.
4. Avoid conflict-reducing techniques such as majority vote, averaging coin flips, and bargaining. When a dissenting member finally agrees, don't feel that he or she must be rewarded later.

5. Differences of opinion are natural and expected. Disagreements can help the group decision because with a wide range of information there is a greater chance that the group will hit upon more adequate solutions.
6. When you can't seem to get anywhere in a large group, break into smaller groups and try to reach consensus. Then return to the larger group and try again.
7. When one or two members simply can't agree with the group after a reasonable period of time, ask them to deliver a minority report based on their logic.

In the end, no rules or theories can really identify what the most appropriate form of PDM will be in a given situation. But when the formidable human resources of a school community are employed, a school will have little trouble developing a specific approach tailored to the needs, skills, and aspirations of those who are to participate in the decision-making process.

Examples of PDM Programs

There are no "magic formulas" for implementing PDM at the school site. Each school is unique and must design a decision-making structure that will fit its own characteristics and needs.

The guidelines presented in the previous section can help administrators conceptualize the general outlines of their schools' PDM system. Another valuable resource in the design process, presented here, is a description of the experiences of other schools with PDM systems. We present brief descriptions of teacher leadership teams in a high school in Indianapolis, Indiana; the School Improvement Process in Hammond, Indiana; the quality circles program in Oregon City, Oregon; and the Quality of Work Life process in Duluth, Minnesota.

Teacher Leadership Teams

Principal William McColly of the Lawrence North High School in Indianapolis, Indiana, decided to base a school improvement program on basic tenets of Japanese organization after reading *Theory Z* by William Ouchi and *The Art of Japanese Management* by Richard Pascale and Anthony Athos. The four components he derived from his studies involved allowing all people opportunities to make decisions about their professional lives, the establishment of trust from top to bottom in the school, a clearly stated set of principles for every program, and the recognition of continuous improvement as the goal of the school and district.

As part of a Kettering Foundation project, the program began in the early 1980s by developing leadership teams of teachers in the ninth and tenth grades. The teams were developed to discuss and propose solutions to problems in their given areas; assignment to the teams was rotated every nine weeks so

that all teachers would be able to take part. The training members received focused on the planning of long-term solutions. Once a problem was designated, an intended outcome that would solve or alleviate the problem was visualized and delineated. Then the needed skills and activities to achieve that outcome were determined and implemented. This objective of "starting at the end" is now being used by teachers in regular class planning.

This type of organization has expanded each year to include the involvement of students and parents in organized committees. McColly reports that the program has resulted in a wide "sense of collegiality developing within our total staff." Teachers are now working on interdepartment projects, expanding the role of the leadership teams. Each year, to increase the training and skills of the new groups, a staff development program is conducted that is "totally planned and presented by members of the staff." McColly considers this one of the finest accomplishments of the program, because teachers are producing "effective staff development programs" on their own.

School Improvement Process

At each of the twenty-five schools in the Hammond, Indiana, school system, a School Improvement Process (SIP) team outlines goals for achieving excellence in the school, designs programs to achieve the goals, and evaluates the programs' success. Because each SIP team has broad authority over what happens in its school, including control over the school's budget, the SIP program combines features of school-based management and participative decision-making.

Patrick O'Rourke, president of the Hammond Teachers Federation, in an interview by *American Educator* (see "Shared Decision-Making at the School Site: Moving toward a Professional Model"), said, "The teams are made up of teachers, administrators, parents, and to a lesser degree, students." Group members are trained in communication and group dynamics. For their problem-solving process, the groups use a modification of the Delphi technique, which, O'Rourke said, "is designed to help people reach consensus on the resolution of a problem by constantly re-examining the nature of the problem."

The basic principle underlying the decision-making process is that decisions should be made by "those who are affected by the decision, those who are closest to it, those who have expertise in the area, those who will be responsible for carrying it out, those who will be living with the decision," O'Rourke said. For example, if an SIP team's proposal affects the entire faculty, everyone would have a voice in the decision. Administrators who serve on SIP teams have no more authority than do the other members in reaching a decision.

Since September 1985, when the SIP program was implemented in all the district's schools, teams have spearheaded significant changes. For example, an elementary school scheduled a ninety-minute block of time for reading activities, another elementary school instituted a junior/senior kindergarten and a transitional first grade, a middle school restructured the school day to

allow more time for faculty interaction, a high school started a mentor program, and five school teams have participated in selecting principals for their schools.

Quality Circles

Quality circles, implemented in several schools across the country, usually require a moderate amount of funding and planning time to develop. According to a list compiled by Zahra and his colleagues, commonly used steps for initiating quality circles in schools include appointing a steering committee, selecting a program coordinator, developing an implementation plan, collecting base-line data, choosing a pilot group of circle leaders, introducing the program to all employees, starting initial pilot circles, and then performing an initial program review, expansion, and continuing evaluations.

The Oregon City School District followed these steps in 1983 after receiving funding from the Northwest Area Foundation for a three-year implementation project. The planning resulted in the organization of three pilot quality circles in the Oregon City High School. A language arts circle of nine teachers focused on the problems of excessive classroom interruptions in the school. A math circle of eight teachers reviewed the distribution and loss of textbooks. A secretarial/clerical circle of nine staff members considered ways to improve communication channels with immediate supervisors. New circles were to be developed that would involve additional teachers, secretaries, custodians, parents, and students.

When Hawley described this program in 1984, positive effects of the high school's quality circles were already widely felt. "The enhanced relationship between teachers and administrators is something everyone sees," he noted. Some of the recommendations from the circles have been adopted by the school, resulting in "changes such as fewer classroom interruptions and better control of inventory."

Just as important as the operational improvements of the school, Hawley said, are the "people building." The key is to develop people who can work together to achieve common goals and allow them to attempt even more difficult problems in the future. The new knowledge and skills of the circle members will benefit all of their daily activities and enhance the quality of the district as well.

Quality circles do not alter an organization's authority structure. That is, the management is free to accept or reject a circle's recommendations. In any case, however, management should respond to the ideas and data collected, recognizing their worth and conclusions. Most of the time, the recommendations are accepted because the problem-solving techniques circle members learn to use are simple, sound, and effective.

Quality of Work Life Process

In 1984 the Duluth (Minnesota) Public Schools initiated a Quality of

Work Life process that is the centerpiece of participative management in the district. Developed jointly by the district's top management and leaders of the Duluth Federation of Teachers, the process features a districtwide Steering Committee and thirty-five problem-solving committees that represent building sites or selected programs, according to Elliott Moeser and Leonard Golen.

Each site committee is made up of the school principal or program supervisor, the building steward, and eight to twelve staff members. Participation is voluntary, say Moeser and Golen. The committees prioritize and research issues brought to their attention and then propose solutions, which must be reached by consensus. Final decision-making and implementation of decisions are the responsibility of the administration.

"Meetings of the Quality of Work Life committees are held on work time," say Moeser and Golen. If the meetings cannot be scheduled during the work day, the district awards compensatory time to the participants.

Recognizing that a process involving thirty-six groups requires continual coordination, the district appointed a facilitator to assist the Steering Committee. Among the facilitator's duties are training group members in participative management, encouraging open lines of communication among the units, maintaining records of issues addressed, and making presentations on the process.

Contract issues can be discussed only at the Steering Committee level and then only by agreement of the union, administration, and school board. "In no case does the Quality of Work Life process substitute for negotiations or unit contracts," the authors say. Nevertheless, they point out that "many issues that would have been brought to the bargaining table are solved through dialogue and consensus" in the Quality of Work Life process.

Conclusion

Research and practice have confirmed what proponents of participative approaches have long claimed—that PDM can lead to better decisions, better implementation, greater job satisfaction, and improved school communications.

But simply increasing participation in decision-making is not enough to ensure a smoothly functioning school. As James Lipham stresses, "effective principals recognize the need for situational leadership" and will utilize a variety of decision-making styles according to the dictates of the situation.

When a participative approach is called for, the effective school leader will consider all the variables involved—who should be involved, their optimum level of involvement, what will be decided, and how it will be decided—and then will clearly communicate to the group the design of the decision-making process. When used in this way, PDM can be one of the most effective techniques a leader can use to motivate others to "strive willingly for group goals."